

Appl. No.: 10/554,132
Amdt. Dated: September 18, 2008
Reply to Office Action of June 20, 2008

REMARKS

Applicants have now had opportunity carefully to consider the Examiner's comments set forth in the Office Action of June 20, 2008.

The Office Action refers to the following citations:

SHINOBE-7	JP 7-204075
SHINOBE-9	JP 9-108089
BLANCHARD-5	US 5,137,191
MAINETTI	US 2003/136806
GOULDSON	US 6,435,387
	US 6,308,872
BLANCHARD-4	US 4,653,678

Claims 1 – 32 have been previously cancelled from this application. Claims 33-62 are pending and are currently being prosecuted before the USPTO and all remaining claims are rejected by the Examiner.

Claims 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 49, 50, 52-54, 56, 57, 60 and 62 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as lacking novelty in the light of SHINOBE-7. The Office Action states that ribs 35a, 35b and 35c in Figures 1(b) and 1(c) of SHINOBE-7 are not regarded by the Examiner as strengthening ribs *"because the ribs are for the purpose of securing element 30"*. However, Applicants submit that from Fig. 1(c) it is apparent that rib 35c, and therefore by extension also ribs 35a and 35b, extend from a front wall of the hanger to a back wall and therefore a person skilled in the art would understand that the ribs would take some of the stresses to which the garment hanger is subject, and therefore SHINOBE-7 does not disclose a garment hanger without internal strengthening ribs in which a majority of stresses to which the garment hanger is subject are carried by an outer skin of the garment hanger, as claimed in independent claims 33 and 53. It is noted that in the description of the prior art a corresponding rib 14a in Figure 3, which is also principally for locating a rod 18, is actually referred to as a "vertical reinforcing rib" (paragraph [0003]). Moreover, judging by the manner in which the holding fixture 30 is

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attached to the arms, it is submitted that the holding fixture 30 would also take some of the stress to which the hanger is subject in use by at least bracing the arms apart.

Moreover, it is noted that the ribs in SHINOBE-7 define a cavity formed by the underside of horizontal rib 35c, vertical rib 35 and the wall of the semicircular cross-section member 26 forming an enclosed space so that the ribs cannot be moulded in one piece with the semicircular cross-section member 26. The garment hanger of claims 1 and 53 therefore has a further advantage over the hanger of SHINOBE-7 that the lower half of the claimed garment hanger can be moulded in one piece whereas the lower half of the hanger of SHINOBE-7 has to be moulded in at least two parts and then assembled. It will be understood that consequentially the claimed garment hanger is less expensive to manufacture than the hanger of SHINOBE-7.

It is therefore submitted that claims 33 and 53 are novel and non-obvious in the light of SHINOBE-7 and therefore that the claims dependent thereon are novel and non-obvious.

In particular, in respect of amended claims 38 and 55 it is noted that the disclosure of SHINOBE-7 is of a bent holding fixture 30 whereas amended claims 38 and 55 are to a straight bar means. Claims 38 and 55 are therefore novel with respect to the disclosure of SHINOBE-7.

The straight bar means of claims 38 and 55 has the advantage that the bar means can be assembled with the lower half of the garment hanger simply by passing the bar means successively through respective apertures in respective arms of the lower half of the garment hanger of the invention, whereas the holding fixture 30 of SHINOBE-7 has to be first bent into a U-shape to pass through the apertures in the lower half of the hanger and the rib 35c and then each end of the holding fixture bent twice more to form the locking piece 34.

Claims 38 and 55 are therefore novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-7.

Moreover, SHINOBE-7 does not disclose or suggest a straight bar means passing through apertures in opposed arms of a garment hanger in which the apertures have a vertical projection corresponding to a transverse cross-section of the bar means as claimed in amended claims 43 and 56 and therefore Applicants submit that amended claims 43 and 56 are novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-7.

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Moreover, SHINOBE-7 does not disclose or suggest alignment means for aligning the edges 25 and 28 of the upper half 24 and lower half 26 of the hanger of SHINOBE-7 as claimed in claim 49 and illustrated by elements 21 and 41 in Figure 7. It is therefore submitted that claim 49 is novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-7.

Moreover there is no hint or suggestion in SHINOBE-7 of engagement means for engaging suspension means of a further garment hanger for suspending a further garment hanger from the garment hanger of SHINOBE-7, so that claims 50, 52, 60 and 62 are novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-7.

The Office Action rejects claims 33, 37, 45-47, 49-50, 53, 55, 59-60 and 62 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as lacking novelty in the light of SHINOBE-9. The Office Action asserts that the struts 3a joining the upper section 2 to the lower section 3 are not, in the Examiner's view, internal strengthening ribs because "*they are for the sole purpose of attaching portion 2 to portion 3*". Whatever their prime purpose, Applicants submit that a person skilled in the art would understand that the two or more bosses 2a (paragraph [0005], claim 2) would take some of the stresses to which the garment hanger is subject, and therefore SHINOBE-9 does not disclose a garment hanger without internal strengthening ribs in which a majority of stresses to which the garment hanger is subject are carried by an outer skin of the garment hanger, as claimed in independent claims 33 and 53.

Applicants therefore submit that claims 33 and 53 are novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-9 and therefore the claims dependent thereon are also novel and non-obvious.

Moreover, in particular, the upper and lower portions of the hanger of SHINOBE-9 are joined by crimped bosses (paragraph [0005] and therefore there is no suggestion in SHINOBE-9 of cooperating clip means as claimed in claim 37 so that claim 37 is novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-9.

Furthermore, SHINOBE-9 discloses hooks 4b which protrude below the hanger of SHINOBE-9 so that there is no suggestion in SHINOBE-9 of loop engaging means in respective

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cavities in opposed arms as claimed in claim 46 or in bar means as claimed in claim 47 and claims 46 and 47 are therefore novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-9.

Moreover there is no hint or suggestion in SHINOBE-9 of engagement means for engaging suspension means of a further garment hanger for suspending a further garment hanger from the garment hanger of SHINOBE-9, so that claims 50, 52, 60 and 62 are novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-9.

Furthermore the hooks 40 of SHINOBE-9 are separate entities and so there is no suggestion in SHINOBE-9 of moulding a lower portion of a hanger comprising moulding loop engaging means as claimed in claim 59, so that claim 59 is novel and non-obvious with respect to SHINOBE-9.

The Office Action rejects claims 35-36 and 55 to means of connecting the two portions of the hanger under U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-7 and BLANCHARD-5.

However, since Applicants submit that the claims on which claims 35-36 and 55 depend are novel and non-obvious in the light of SHINOBE-7 and BLANCHARD-5, then Applicants submit that claims 35-36 and 55 are also novel and non-obvious.

The Office Action rejects claims 40-42, 44 and 58 to features of the horizontal bar, and in particular to the non-slip coating, under U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-7 and MAINETTI. Applicants note that there is no indication in SHINOBE-7 that the holding fixture 30 is for any purpose other than supplying rigidity to the hanger, and no hint that a garment might be supported by the holding fixture 30. Applicants therefore submit there is no incentive for adding a non-slip material to the holding fixture 30 of SHINOBE-7, as claimed in respect of the skirt or trouser bar of the present application in the rejected claims.

In any case, since Applicants submit that the claims on which claims 40-42, 44 and 58 depend are novel and non-obvious, then Applicants also submit that claims 40-42, 44 and 58 are novel and non-obvious.

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Claim 48 to a transparent or at least partially translucent hanger is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-7 and GOULDSON or in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-9 and GOULDSON.

However, since applicantssubmit that claim 33 on which claim 48 ultimately depends is novel and non-obvious in the light of both SHINOBE-7 and GOULDSON and in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-9 and GOULDSON, then applicantssubmit that claim 48 is also novel and non-obvious in the light of the cited art.

Claims 51 and 61 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being non-obvious in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-7 and BLANCHARD or in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-9 and BLANCHARD.

However, since applicantssubmit that claims 33 and 53 on which the claims ultimately respectively depend are novel and non-obvious in the light of SHINOBE-7 and BLANCHARD or in the light of a combination of SHINOBE-9 and BLANCHARD, then applicantssubmit that claims 51 and 61 are also novel and non-obvious in the light of the cited art.

Reconsideration of the rejections, in light of the aforesaid amendments and present remarks, is respectively requested. The present amendments have been entered for the purpose of placing the application into a proper condition for allowance.

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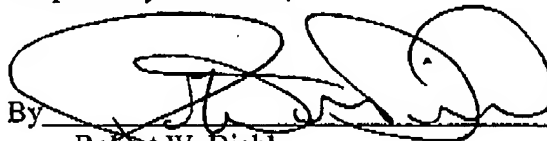
CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons detailed above, it is submitted that all claims remaining in the application (Claims 33-62) are in condition for allowance. The foregoing comments and amendments do not require additional search or examination.

The undersigned attorney of record hereby authorizes charging of any necessary fees, other than the issue fee, to the Deposit Account No. 19-1351.

Should any formalities remain which can be corrected by Examiner's amendment, Applicant requests that the undersigned be contacted by phone in order to expedite the prosecution of the present case.

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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